

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /048 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6249

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT JA

SUBJ: TANAKA RESIGNATION TO BE ANNOUNCED NEXT WEEK

REF: TOKYO 15235

DEPARTMENT PASS SAM 27000 IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SEOUL PASS PRESIDENTIAL PARTY

SUMMARY: WITH PRIME MINISTER TANAKA'S RESIGNATION A FOREGONE CONCLUSION, LDP Factions are engaged in intense debate over their strategy and tactics in the contest to pick a successor. The political schedule now shaping up calls for TANAKA'S FORMAL NOTICE OF INTENT TO RELINQUISH THE LDP PRESIDENCY ON NOVEMBER 25 OR 26 A SPECIAL CONVENTION TO CHOOSE A NEW PARTY LEADER ON DECEMBER 10 OR 11, AND THE ELECTION OF A NEW PRIME MINISTER AT THE EXTRAORDINARY DIET TO BE CONVENED ON OR ABOUT DECEMBER 12. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER TANAKA'S RESIGNATION, WHILE NOT YET FORMALLY ANNOUNCED, IS NOW A DEFINITE MATTER. IT IS UNDER-
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STOOD IN ALL QUARTERS THAT HE WILL OFFICIALLY NOTIFY THE LDP

LEADERSHIP NEXT WEEK ON NOVEMBER 25 OR 26 OF HIS INTENTION TO STEP DOWN BECAUSE OF POOR HEALTH AND TO TAKE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE POLITICAL CONFUSION CAUSED BY THE RECENT UPROAR OVER HIS ALLEGED FINANCIAL MISCONDUCT. THE LDP EXECUTIVE IS THEN EXPECTED TO DECIDE WHETHER TANAKA'S SUCCESSOR WILL BE CHOSEN BY CONSULTATION AND CONSENSUS AMONG SENIOR PARTY LEADERS OR BY A PARTY ELECTION. IF THE LATTER, A SPECIAL LDP CONVENTION WILL BE HELD IN TOKYO ON DECEMBER 9 OR 10 TO CHOOSE A NEW PARTY PRESIDENT WHO WILL THEN BE ELECTED PRIME MINISTER BY THE EXTRAORDINARY DIET WHICH WILL BE CONVENED ON OR ABOUT DECEMBER 12.

2. WITH THE SCENARIO FOR TANAKA'S DEPARTURE ASSUMING CONCRETE FORM, THE FOCUS OF POLITICAL ATTENTION IS NOW CENTERED ON THE SUCCESSION RACE THAT IS ALREADY UNDER WAY. AT THE PRESENT TIME THE MAIN QUESTION BEING DEBATED IS WHAT METHOD SHOULD BE USED TO CHOOSE THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER. FINANCE MINISTER OHIRA'S FACTION WHICH SEES THEIR LEADER AS MOST LIKELY TO WIN AN ELECTION CONTEST IS PUSHING HARD FOR A PARTY ELECTION. WITH 452 VOTING DELEGATES DECIDING THE ISSUE AT THE LDP CONVENTION, THE OHIRA CAMP BELIEVES IT CAN MUSTER 217 SURE VOTES -- JUST TEN SHORT OF THE 227 NEEDED FOR VICTORY -- SINCE IT CAN COUNT ON ALL OF THE TANAKA FACTION'S 90 VOTES AND AT LEAST HALF OF THE VOTES HELD BY NEUTRAL FACTION MEMBERS AND PREFECTURAL DELEGATES. FUKUDA AND MIKI, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE COME OUT STRONGLY FOR A DECISION BY CONSULTATION AMONG PARTY ELDERS, ARGUING THAT (1) OHIRA WOULD BE SEEN AS JUST ANOTHER TANAKA AND WOULD FAIL TO CLEAR UP THE PUBLIC DISTRUST OF THE LDP, AND (2) THE DIRTY POLITICS THAT ACCOMPANIES A PARTY ELECTION WOULD INTENSIFY PUBLIC CRITICISM OF AND DISTASTE FOR THE LDP. FUKUDA SUPPORTERS ARE ALSO ARGUING THAT AS RUNNER-UP IN THE LAST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, HE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED THE NATURAL SUCCESSOR TO TANAKA.

3. TANAKA FACTION DIET MEMBER CHUJI KUNO, CHIEF OF THE LDP EXECUTIVE BUREAU, WHOSE PREDICTIONS LAST WEEK PROVED TO BE VERY MUCH ON THE MARK (TOKYO 14978), TOLD ENBOD TODAY THAT HE BELIEVES A PARTY CONVENTION AND ELECTION TO BE INEVITABLE, AND THAT FUKUDA IS AWARE OF THIS. ACCORDING TO KUNO FUKUDA OPPOSES AN ELECTION BUT IS PREPPING FOR IT; HE IS TRYING TO AUGMENT HIS STRENGTH AMONG THE

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UNCOMMITTED DIETMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SO-CALLED NEUTRAL Factions. BY CAMP8&8;& - "MR CLEAN" AGAINST TANAKA'S BESMIRCHED IMAGE.

4. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY FOR ANY MEANINGFUL ANALYSIS OF THE FACTIONAL SITUATION WHICH IS STILL VERY MUCH IN FLUX. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT, WHILE HALF EXPECTED, TANAKA'S DECISION TO STEP DOWN ACTUALLY CAUGHT THE PARTY SOMEWHAT BY

SURPRISE. IN OUR VIEW, THE DECISION NOT TO FIGHT IT OUT
WITH THE OPPOSITION IN THE DIET AND NOT TO DELAY DECISION ANY
LONGER THAN NECESSARY WAS MADE ON THE BASIS OF TANAKA'S JUDGEAMENT
THAT A GRACEFUL EXIT AT THIS JUNCTURE WAS THE BEST MEANS TO INSURE
THE CONTINUITY OF HIS POWER AND INFLUENCE IN LDP. HE WILL
UNDOUBTEDLY EXERT HIS STILL CONSIDERABEL POWER TO HELP OHIRA
WIN THE SUCCESSION AND MAY EVEN LOOK FORWARD TO MAKING A
PERSONAL COMEBACK SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE.
HODGSON

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SAM 27000.

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